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Meriden Ct.

Council of Neighborhoods_{inc}

a 501C3 IRS Non Profit Organization

www.meridencona.org

David T. Swedock, President 77 Oak St. , Meriden, Ct. 06450 Dswedock@snet.net

March 2, 2009

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
Delay Raise the Age Bill / Gov. Bill # 6386

I am respectfully requesting my written testimony be submitted for the Judiciary Comm. Public hearing on or about March 2,2009 regarding Governors Bill 6386, Delaying the Raise the Age Bill.

Honorable State Representatives:

I am in support of Governor Rells proposal to delay the Raise Age bill until at least 2012 if not later. I would rather prefer that this act be repealed altogether for the sake of the safety of our inner cities.

My name is David Swedock, I am the President of the Council of Neighborhoods, the parent organization of the 30 Neighborhood Associations and Block Watches of Meriden Ct. and I live in the inner city district of Meriden. I am also a retired State Vocational Technical School instructor of 22 years at E. C. Goodwin Tech., New Britain, and an inner city school.

We are, and were originally, opposed to the juvenile age being raised because of a multitude of concerns relating to inner city youth violence. Although we believe the original sponsors of this bill were well intentioned, it is evidently clear that this bill cannot be successful without a massive monetary expenditure and corresponding increases of new judges, probation officers, parole officers, social workers, court clerks, bailiffs, security, etc etc plus the physical establishment of new G.A, Juvenile courthouses separate from the adults. There was one estimate of at least a \$ 400 million cost to do this properly. This does not include the unfunded mandates upon local law enforcement agencies which also must make physical and manpower changes to accommodate this new law.

Might I quote a Noted Judge of the Ct. Judicial System, Judge William Lavery who testified on Feb 27, 2007 at the Select Committee on Children, regarding the Juvenile Justice Act. The Honorable Judge William Lavery is Quoted as saying

"While I support the concept of incorporating 16- and 17-year-olds into the juvenile justice system, this represents a major change in policy and has significant implications for everyone who deals with this population. My support must be contingent on attaining the necessary funding and resources to successfully implement the change. Failure to provide adequate funding for the court staff, other agency staff, and services will cause serious harm to the kids currently served by the system, a situation I cannot let happen. I just 30 or 40 years ago I was here in the Legislature when they had

a lot of reforms in mental health, and they were going to take folks out of the institutions and put them in the community. But they never provided for the community services or provided the funding, and unfortunately, many of these folks who really need mental help now are in our jails when they shouldn't be. And this has been a 40-year tragedy, and I don't want this to become a tragedy. I want it to work." (Ct.St legislature archives 2007KID00227-R000900-CHR)

Judge Lavery has admitted this program wont work without a large influx of Money, Personnel and new programs and services. We concur 100% and since we live in the inner city, will feel the direct impact of this almost certain monumental failure.

I must add that we are not advocating the mass incarceration of juveniles. We are advocating that the Professionals with experience, in this case the Police and current Judicial counterparts decide which "so-called" juveniles should be removed from the streets, either for their own safety or the safety of the general public.

It is our view that 16 and 17 years olds are not juveniles in today's society. They have their own vehicles, jobs, cell phones, credit cards and are having children themselves younger and younger. Most gang members who present problems to the inner city are between 14-19, they carry guns and carry out acts of violence with reckless abandon. These hard-core types are the ones we are worried will become part of the revolving door syndrome. Thanks to your solution to this bill, according to the Juvenile Justice Alliance, juveniles will be able to sign themselves out on a promise to appear.

Concern #3: There are not enough facilities to hold these additional juveniles at police stations while we wait for their parents to come pick them up or allow us to question their child.

Statutory change in Raised Bill that addresses and negates that concern:

Police may release these youth to their own custody with a promise to appear in court, so do not need extra facilities to hold those youth or extra police time to supervise those youth while they are in custody. Sec. 146 b 133 sec. 2 (c)

These Changes Address Municipality's Concerns About "Unfunded Mandates" of treating 16- and 17-year-olds as juveniles.

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I have to admit, that was really brilliant on your part, telling us kids are not mentally ready to make decisions until 18 because they are juveniles, yet you now say the hard core "juveniles" can sign himself out. This just does not make sense.

But most legislators do not live in the inner city like us, they you do not have a clue and they ignore the warnings of the police, like they were adversaries. Yet they blame the police for not being able to control crime especially in New Haven where the gangs run wild. I am proud to say Meriden has a progressive Police Dept. that actively works to prevent crime. If this Raise the Age bill becomes law, we may be reduced to the same level as New Haven because the Police Depts hands will be tied.

Sincerely

David T. Swedock, Pres. Council of Neighborhoods Meriden Ct.